

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2453

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 0118 FINAL SECTION OF TWO

BEIRUT ALSO POUCH BAGHDAD

9. ZAYID'S FOREIGN POLICY HAS POSED SOME STRAINS INTERNALLY BUT ON
BALANCE IT HAS PROBABLY SERVED TO CONTRIBUTE TO INTERNAL STABILITY OF
FEDERATION. HIS PROPENSITY FOR ACTIVISM IN ARAB AFFAIRS, AND PRO-
FLIGATE EAST WITH WHICH HE DISPENSES MONEY TO FOREIGNERS, HAS
MADE OTHER RULERS UNEASY. MOST WOULD HAVE TO ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT
SOME IMPORTANT BENEFITS HAVE FLOWED FROM HIS POLICY. GOOD RELATIONS
HE HAS ESTABLISHED WITH ARAB RADICALS, INCLUDING PALESTINIANS, AND
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HIS ATTEMPT EVEN TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH IRAQIS, HAVE PROBABLY

INHIBITED INTERNAL SUBVERSION THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN INSPIRED OR SUPPORTED FROM THESE QUARTERS. OTHER SHAIKHS HAVE GREATER FREEDOM (AND MOST ARE INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO REALIZE IT) TO RULE THEIR FIEFDOMS IN PERSONAL AND AUTOCRATIC MANNER THAT IS THEIR WONT BECAUSE THEY ARE SHELTERING UNDER FEDERATION THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN STAMP OF APPROVAL IN ARAB AFFAIRS.

10. IN MAINTAINING FEDERATION ZAYID HAS SENSIBLY RELIED PRIMARILY ON POLICIES OF CONSENSUS, BUT HE HAS ALSO TAKEN OUT INSURANCE POLICY IN FORM OF MAKING ABU DHABI DEFENSE FORCE, WHICH IS RESPONSIVE TO HIM PERSONALLY, LARGEST AND BEST EQUIPPED MILITARY FORCE IN UAE. WHILE ABILITY OF ADDF TO DETER EXTERNAL THREAT IS QUESTIONABLE, IT IS EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO MAKE ANY ELEMENTS IN SHAIKHDOMS PONDERING INSURRECTION TO THINK TWICE. IN CASE OF TROUBLE WITHIN SHAIKHDOMS ZAYID WOULD SEEK TO GAIN QUICK CONSENSUS AMONG SHAIKHS SO THAT ADDF AND UNION DEFENSE FORCE COULD ACT TOGETHER TO RESTORE ORDER. BUT IF THIS WERE NOT READILY FORTHCOMING HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT WAIT LONG TO SEND IN ADDF ALONE.

11. FOR THESE VARIOUS REASONS WE BELIEVE SCOPE FOR ANY OF THE RULERS ATTEMPTING EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY TO BREAK OUT OF FEDERATION HAS STEADILY ERODED IN PAST THREE YEARS. IF POINT OF WEAKNESS STILL EXISTS, IT IS IN RAS AL-KHAIMAH. SHAIKH SAQR IS INTELLIGENT AND AMBITIOUS, AND ACCORDING TO SOME HE STILL HEARS VOICES FROM PAST WHEN NORTHERN QAWASIM WERE CLASSY SEAFARERS WHO LORDED IT OVER THE FLEA-BITTEN CAMEL HERDERS OF ABU DHABI. SAQR CHAFES UNDER MONTHLY STIPEND ZAYID DOLES OUT TO HIM WHICH HE CONSIDERS INADEQUATE, AND HE TRIES TO MAINTAIN HIS INDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP WITH SAUDI ARABIA AS ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF FUNDS. BUT EVEN SHAIKH SAQR PROBABLY NOW ACCEPTS FEDERATION AS IRREVERSIBLE FACT, AND WE BELIEVE HIS AMBITIONS NOW TAKE FORM OF SEEKING GREATER PERSONAL POWER WITHIN CONTEXT OF UAE FEDERATION.

12. PERHAPS GREATEST FORESEEABLE DANGER IS THAT SHAIKH ZAYID MIGHT SUDDENLY DIE. HIS ELDEST SON KHALIFA SHOWS FEW QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP. FEDERAL AUTHORITY WOULD PASS TO VICE PRESIDENT SHAIKH RASHID, BUT RASHID'S INTEREST IN FEDERATION IS SO RELUCTANT AND MINIMAL THAT DANGEROUS PERIOD OF LACK OF LEADERSHIP MIGHT ENSUE. INTO THIS SITUATION A SAQR, OR SHAIKH FAISAL AL-QASIMI, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ABU DHABI DEFENSE FORCE, MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO STEP. RESULTANT INSTABILITY
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WOULD IN TURN CARRY RISK OF INTERVENTION BY OUTSIDERS. BUT ZAYID, NOW IN HIS LATE FIFTIES, IS IN REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH AND BARRING BAD LUCK THERE IS NO REASON TO ASSUME HIS EARLY DEMISE. THERE MAY BE YET BE TIME TO PUT ABU DHABI SUCCESSION ON SOUNDER FOOTING, PERHAPS BY GROOMING YOUNGER SON SULTAN.

13. UAE AT THIS STAGE ALSO HAS MANY PROBLEMS BROUGHT ON BY RAPID DEVELOPMENT THAT STRAIN THE POLITICAL FABRIC. GOVERNMENTAL APPARATUS

IS FEEBLE; MANPOWER BASE IS INADEQUATE; REALIANCE UPON FOREIGNERS (MANY OF WHOSE LOYALTY AS WELL AS EXPERTISE IS QUESTIONED) IS ACCORDINGLY HEAVY; AND ECONOMIC WEALTH IS PUTTING DEMANDS ON DECISION-MAKING IN TERMS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD STRAIN FAR MORE EXPERIENCED GOVERNMENTS. PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH HAS BEEN DONE BY ZAYID TO GIVE FEDERATION STRONG AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION, NOT THAT THIS WOULD BE EASY IN BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. CERTAIN OF HIS ADVISORS ARE RECOMMENDING A CRASH PROGRAM, EVEN IF THIS ENTAILS CONFRONTATION WITH THE OTHER SHAIKHS, TO GIVE THE FEDERATION REAL STRENGTH. WE THINK ZAYID SEES TIME AS ESSENTIALLY ON HIS SIDE, THAT HE WILL ESCHEW CONFRONTATION IN FAVOR OF GRADUALISM, AND THAT HIS OVERALL APPROACH WILL BE TO PRESERVE HARMONIOUS ATMOSPHERE THAT ALLOWS ORGANIC FORCES WITHIN THE STATE TO DEVELOP NATIONAL UNITY.

14. IT IS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT IN SHORT AND MIDDLE TERM (LET US SAY 3-5 YEARS) FEDERAL STRUCTURE WITH ITS SHAIKHLY UNDERPINNINGS, STANDS GOOD CHANCE OF SURVIVING AND EVEN SURMOUNTING MANY OF CHALLENGES THAT FACE IT. THERE IS AS YET NO ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT IN UAE, AND POSSIBILITY OF THREAT FROM MILITARY IS RENDERED LESS LIKELY BY CONTINUED PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MILITARY ADVISORS IN MANY KEY POSITIONS, AS WELL AS ZAYID'S POLICY OF CUTTING OFFICER CLASS IN ON ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF OIL BOOM. OVER LONGER TERM, PACE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HERE WILL PLACE HEAVY DEMANDS ON GOVERNMENT FOR EFFICIENT

AND FORWARD-LOOKING ADMINISTRATION, AND IT IS OPEN QUESTION WHETHER PRESENT REGIME OF SHAIKHS, WITH ITS AFFLUENT AND OFTEN CORRUPT LIFE STYLE, CAN ADAPT FAST ENOUGH TO PROVIDE IT. FOR TIME BEING, HOWEVER, ZAYID AND COMPANY SEEM TO BE DOING WELL ENOUGH, AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, WE DO NOT SEE AT THIS STAGE LIKELIHOOD OF COALESCENCE OF ELEMENTS THAT MIGHT MOUNT SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE TO REGIME. STERNER

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